# W. Cooke Taylor, Notes of A Tour In The Manufacturing Districts Of Lancashire (Manchester and Environs), 1842

(William Cook Taylor (1800-49), the son of a manufacturer in Ireland, earned a BA at Trinity College and moved to London in 1829. Taylor worked on behalf of the Anti-Corn Law League which sponsored his book excerpted below. In a series of letters addressed to his patron, Dr. Richard Whately (1787-1863), an important political economist, Taylor emphasized the transformation of Lancashire by the new textile factories during a period of trade depression between 1837-43. He offered an optimistic interpretation. W. Cooke Taylor, *Notes Of A Tour In The Manufacturing Districts Of Lancashire; In A Series Of Letters To His Grace The Archbishop Of Dublin.**Second Edition; With Two Additional Letters On The Recent Disturbances*. London, Duncan and Malcolm, 1842, pp. iii-36.)

PREFACE.

It has long been my purpose to write a description of the Factory System, as I had good reason to believe that its moral worth and social importance were generally misunderstood, and, therefore, not appreciated. A life spent in retirement, and devoted to literature, so far qualified me for the task as to leave me free from prejudices of party: I set out with a determination to see and judge for myself; I repeated my visits to the manufacturing districts for the purpose of testing the accuracy of my former observations. It was my custom on these little tours to send brief accounts of what I saw to the venerated Prelate to whom these printed Letters are addressed. In my recent tour I saw too much to allow of my adherence to my old plan, and I am induced to believe that what I saw must at this crisis possess general interest.

In preparing my notes for the press I have followed the plan which I would have adopted had I desired these Letters to be private. I have written them up just as they came, and as they were jotted down, believing that the vividness of first impressions and the point of immediate reflections would atone for abruptness of transition and a little occasional digression.

In going over so much ground in a short space of time, it is probable that I may have sometimes adopted hasty conclusions; but of this my readers will be able to judge, as I have set before them the reasons and evidence on which my inferences were founded. My sole anxiety was to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; and my dearest wish is that, on the various important questions connected with the manufacturing districts of the North of England, " a true verdict" may be given, “according to the evidence," by the government and the country.

I have only to add that the Archbishop of Dublin is not responsible for any opinions contained in these Letters, as he will see their contents for the first time on their appearance in print.

W. C. T.

*34, Arlington- Street, Camden Town, July, 1842*

GRATIFIED, as I naturally have been, by the favourable notice which this little volume has received from the leading public journals of almost every political party, I found intermingled with the praise some objections to my statements and reasonings which seemed entitled to my respectful attention. At the same time, the great movement in the manufacturing districts had afforded the strongest confirmation to the general correctness of my views; and under these circumstances I resolved to make a second tour through the cotton localities., to examine the moral bearing of the operatives, and the actual working of the factory system, under circumstances of peculiar difficulty. Though firmly convinced that factories are not evil in themselves, I am well aware that they may be so ill conducted as to produce much evil; and that cases may arise, as in the instance of infant labour, to render an authoritative interference between the employer and the employed desirable, if not necessary. My inquiries were chiefly directed to ascertaining whether the present dispute respecting wages created any necessity for such interference and I have added two letters to this edition containing the results of my investigations.

It has been rather strangely inferred that advocacy of the factory system is identical with vouching for the character of the entire body of manufacturers; I beg leave to protest against any such inference: while human nature continues what it is, there will be unreasonable masters as well as unreasonable men. But this by no means refutes my position that the factory system may be so conducted, and in instances within my own knowledge has been so conducted, as to create and diffuse social happiness. It has also been insinuated that I have taken too favourable a view of the Lancastrian character: I can only say in reply that I have no special motive for flattering the inhabitants of the Duchy; that the proofs of their industry, enterprise, and intelligence are obvious to every one who visits them; and that their moral strength has been fully tested in the recent disturbances, for never was so much of forbearance, moderation, and avoidance of violence displayed in any similar movement.

*September 10, 1842.*

LETTER I, Manchester, 1842

My LORD.

It was originally my intention to have sent you the following letters privately and in manuscript; my change of purpose has been caused by the great interest which the present condition of the Factory population of Lancashire excites generally, and by my own earnest anxiety to enlist public sympathy in favour of a noble and a suffering people. In print as in private I shall state my observations and reflections with perfect freedom and candour, writing as if these letters were designed only for your eye, and as if the public had only got at their contents by peeping over my shoulder. " A*perto vivere scripto " is* perhaps an improvement on " A*perto vivere voto*," and, as the public is to enjoy the benefit of my confessions, I trust that it will not refuse to join in the absolution which I am sure of obtaining from you.

I well remember the effect produced on me by my earliest view of Manchester, when I looked upon the town for the first time from the eminence at the terminus of the Liverpool railways, and saw the forest of chimneys pouring forth volumes of steam and smoke, forming an inky canopy which seemed to embrace and involve the entire place. I felt that I was in the presence of those two mighty and mysterious agencies, fire and water, proverbially the best of servants and the worst of masters; and I felt eager to discover how their powers could be employed to the uttermost, and the perils of their ascendency at the same time averted. Sure I was that such physical agencies, developed before me to a startling extent, must exercise a most important influence over the social, the intellectual, and the moral condition of the community; and I resolved to study their effects in order to discover whether they were productive of good or evil, believing them equally potent for either. Years have passed away since that morning, but repeated visits to Manchester have not weakened the effects of that first impression. These visits, however, have enabled me to correct many hasty errors and mistakes; and I think it right to point out some of these corrections, not because I feel any particular pleasure in the exposure of my own blunders, but because my example may serve to prevent others from falling into similar errors. \*

Like most strangers, I formed at the first an unfavourable opinion of Manchester and the Factory system, because I estimated both by an inapplicable standard,by the results of previous reading and experience. A second error was that I was disposed to regard factories as modes of social existence placed upon their trial,‑to be retained if they were found worthy, and to be rejected if they were proved to be injurious. it was scarcely possible to have made two greater errors at the very outset of my investigations; so long as their influence continued, I was perplexed by the most simple facts, and incapable of discovering their most obvious relations. A great step was gained when I comprehended that the subject I proposed to examine was an "established innovation." \*\*

The Factory system is a modern creation; history throws no light on its nature, for it has scarcely begun to recognise its existence; the philosophy of the schools supplies very imperfect help for estimating its results, because an innovating power of such immense force could never have been anticipated. The steam engine had no precedent, the spinning‑Jenny is without ancestry, the mule and the power‑loom entered on no prepared heritage: they sprang into sudden existence like Minerva from the brain of Jupiter, passing so rapidly through their stage of infancy that they had taken their position in the world and firmly established themselves before there was time to prepare a place for their reception. These potent novelties also made their appearance in a land already crowded with institutions: the force and rapidity with which they developed themselves dislocated all the existing machinery of society, disturbed its very framework, and must necessarily produce, as they have produced, a considerable amount of confusion and suffering until the difficult task of re‑adjustment is completed. A giant forcing his way into a densely‑wedged crowd extends pain and disturbance to its remotest extremity: the individuals he pushes aside push others in their turn, though none know the cause of pressure save those with whom the intruder is immediately in contact; and thus also the Factory system causes its presence to be felt in districts where no manufactures are established: all classes are pressed to make room for the stranger, and all are interested in knowing something of what is thus forced upon their acquaintance. Antecedent to any inquiry it would be well to recognise the Factory system as what statesmen call *un fait accompli*; it exists, and must continue to exist; it is not practicable, even if it were desirable, to get rid of it; millions of human beings depend upon the Factories for their daily bread, ‑ were there heads sufficiently bold and hearts sufficiently hard to propose their extermination, where are the hands by which the sanguinary decree could be executed?\*\*\*

It would be absurd to speak of Factories as mere abstractions, and consider them apart from the manufacturing population: ‑that population is a stern reality, and cannot be neglected with impunity. As a stranger passes through the masses of human beings which have been accumulated round the mills and print‑works in this and the neighbouring towns, he cannot contemplate these " crowded hives" without feelings of anxiety and apprehension almost amounting to dismay. The population, like the system to which it belongs, is NEW; but it is hourly increasing in breadth and strength. It is an aggregate of masses, our conceptions of which clothe themselves in terms that express something portentous and fearful. We speak ‑not of them indeed as of sudden convulsions, tempestuous seas, or furious hurricanes, but as of the slow rising and gradual swelling of an ocean which must, at some future and no distant time, bear all the elements of society aloft upon its bosom, and float them‑Heaven knows whither. There are mighty energies slumbering in those masses: had our ancestors witnessed the assemblage of such a multitude as is poured forth everyevening from the mills of Union Street, magistrates would have assembled, special constables would have been sworn, the riot act read, the military called out, and most probably some fatal collision would have taken place. The crowd now scarcely attracts the notice of a passing policeman, but it is, nevertheless, a crowd, and therefore susceptible of the passions which may animate a multitude.\*\*\*\*

The most striking phenomenon of the Factory system is, the amount of population which it has suddenly accumulated on certain points: there has been long a continuous influx of operatives into the manufacturing districts from other parts of Britain; these men have very speedily laid aside all their old habits and associations, to assume those of the mass in which they are mingled. The manufacturing population is not new in its formation alone: it is new in its habits of thought and action, which have been formed by the circumstances of its condition, with little instruction, and less guidance, from external sources. It may be matter of question whether the circumstances surrounding the manufacturing labourer are better or worse than those belonging to the agricultural condition, but there can be no doubt that the former are preferred by the operative. In the present severe pressure of commercial distress there are scores, and probably hundreds, of workmen, whom the authorities would gladly send back to their parishes if they could bring them legally under the designation of paupers, but these men submit to the pressure of hunger, and all its attendant sufferings, with an iron endurance, which nothing can bend, rather than be carried back to an agricultural district. However severe the condition of the manufacturing operative may be, there is a something behind which he dreads more: he clings to his new state with desperate fidelity, and faces famine rather than return to the farm. The Factory system is, therefore, preferred to the more usual conditions of labour by the population which it employs, and this at once ensures its permanence as a formative element of society, and at the same time renders its influence directly efficacious on character.

I have visited Manchester at seasons when trade was pre‑eminently prosperous: I see it now suffering under severe and unprecedented distress; and I have been very forcibly struck by observing the little change which the altered circumstances have produced in the moral aspect of the population. Agricultural distress soon makes itself known; Swing at this side of the water, and Rock at the other, write the tales of their grievances in characters which no man can mistake, and seek redress by measures strongly marked with the insanity of despair. But suffering here has not loosened the bands of confidence; millions of property remain at the mercy of a rusty nail or the ashes of a tobacco‑pipe, and yet no one feels alarm for the safety of his stock or machinery, though in case of an operative *Jacquerie* they could not be defended by all the military force of England. This very crisis has been a rigid test of the strength of the Factory system, and precludes the necessity of any further argument to show that it cannot be over thrown.

Without detaining you any longer by these general remarks, I shall proceed to examine the social condition of Manchester, which may be considered as the metropolis of the cotton manufacture. No person, however casual a visitor, can for a moment mistake the character of the town. It is essentially a place of business, where pleasure is unknown as a pursuit, and amusements scarcely rank as secondary considerations. Every person who passes you in the street has the look of thought and the step of haste. Few private carriages are to be seen; there is only one street of handsome shops, and that is of modern date; there are some very stately public buildings, but only one of them is dedicated to recreation, the rest are devoted to religion, charity, science, or business. A modern author has started the theory, that, as certain insects assume the colours and marks of the leaves on which they feed, so the citizens of certain towns offer whimsical analogies to the character of the place in which they dwell. This is to a considerable extent true of Manchester. The men are as businesslike as the place, and in their character a zeal for religion, charity, and science is not less conspicuous than the buildings consecrated to these objects are in the town. I might adduce as proofs the subscriptions to the fund for building churches, to the Methodist Centenary Fund, to the funds for relieving the citizens of Hamburgh, for erecting the Lancashire Independent College, for supporting the numerous literary and scientific institutions in the town and its neighbourbood; nor will gratitude permit me to omit the hospitable and magnificent reception given to the members of the British Association at its late meeting in Manchester, though the visit was paid at a season of general depression and great commercial distress.

Were I asked how a stranger could best form a notion of the character of the Manchester manufacturers, I should recommend him to visit the Exchange of Manchester at the period of " high change;" that is, about noon on a Tuesday. It is the parliament of the lords of cotton‑their legislative assembly‑which enacts laws as immutable as those of the Medes and Persians, but, unlike every other parliament in the world, very much is done and very little is said. Nowhere can there be found so practical a comment on the well‑known line, -Silence that speaks, and eloquence of eyes

Transactions of immense extent are conducted by nods, winks, shrugs, or brief phrases, compared to which the laconisms of the ancient Spartans were specimens of tediousness and verbosity. There is a kind of vague tradition, or rather remote recollection, that a man was once seen to gossip on the Exchange: it was mentioned in the terms one would use if he saw a saraband danced in St. Peter's, or Harlequin playing his antics at the Old Bailey. For my own part, I felt my loquacious tendencies so chilled by the genius of the place, that I deemed myself qualified to become a candidate for La Trappe.

The characteristic feature of the assembly is talent and intelligence in high working order genius and stupidity appear to be equally absent but if the average of intellect‑be not very high, it is evident that not a particle of it remains unemployed. It has been my fortune to visit this place in a season of great commercial prosperity and activity, and more recently at this period of stagnation and depression. On the first occasion, a stranger would imagine that he had got into one of, those communities of dancing dervishes whose rule inculcates silence and perpetual motion. It seemed as if each man was incapable of remaining in the same spot for three continuous seconds: it is the principle of a Manchester man that "nought is done where aught remains to do: "let him have but the opportunity, and he will under­ take to supply all the markets between Lima and Pekin, and he will be exceedingly vexed if, by any oversight, he has omitted a petty village which could purchase a yard of cloth or a hank of yarn. The marks of Manchester manufacturers are as well known in Bokhara or Samarcand as in Liverpool or London, and its patterns guide taste equally under the burning sun of Africa and amid the snows of Siberia.

The aspect of the Exchange at this period of commercial distress is perfectly appalling: there is a settled gloom on every countenance, accompanied with a restlessness of eye quite out of keeping with the contracted brow and the compressed lip. Eagerness is changed into obstinacy; men seem to feel that their profits, if not their capitals, are slipping from their hands, and they have made up their minds to bear a certain amount of loss, but not to endure one fraction more. Whether trade be active or dull, " high change" lasts little more than an hour: after the clock strikes two the meeting gradually but noiselessly melts away, without your being very well able to account for the disappearance of the several forms: before three the building is as empty and deserted as one of the catacombs of Egypt.

I have been thus particular in describing the symptoms of commercial prosperity or commercial distress on the Exchange of Manchester, for I know of no other part of the town in which you can easily obtain certain indications of either the one or the other. Contrary to general belief, experience has shown me that Manchester does not afford a fair specimen of the factory population in any of the conditions of its existence, and that the outward aspect of the place affords a very imperfect test of the state of trade in South Lancashire, It must, in the first place, be observed that there is always, and must necessarily be, considerable distress in a place where there is a large demand for untrained labour: Though the factories require skilled labour; yet there are many occupations connected with the commerce of cotton which only demand the exertion of brute strength such, for instance, are porterage, lighterage, coalheaving, &c. This demand for untrained labour is not so great as in Liverpool, nor could Manchester exhibit anything so low in the social scale as the dock‑population of that port; still the demand exists to a considerable extent, and is mainly, if not entirely, supplied by immigrants from Ireland, Wales, Scotland, and the English agricultural counties. In consequence of the rapidity of the growth of manufactures in Manchester, the increase of population very rapidly outstripped the means of accommodation; even the factory operatives are badly lodged, and the dwellings of the class below them are the most wretched that can be conceived. This is particularly the case in the township of Manchester: its narrow streets, its courts and cellars, have been abandoned to the poorest grade of all. There they live, hidden from the view of the higher ranks by piles of stores, mills, warehouses, and manufacturing establishments, less known to their wealthy neighbours, ‑who reside chiefly in the open spaces of Cheetham, Broughton, and Chorlton,‑than the inhabitants of New Zealand or Kamtschatka.

Your Grace is aware that to some extent Dublin is similarly divided into the city of the rich and the city of the poor; but I know that many respectable and wealthy manufacturers reside in the liberties of Dublin, while the smoke‑nuisance drives everybody from the township of Manchester who can possibly find means of renting a house elsewhere. These conditions necessarily produce an unhealthy condition of society, both physically and morally. I find that in the township of Manchester the rate of mortality is so high as 1 in 30; and, making every allowance for the swelling, of the number of deaths by aged and sickly immigration from the rural districts, this rate indicates a very large amount of misery and suffering arising from causes purely physical.

Another evil of fearful magnitude arises from this separation of Manchester into districts in which relative poverty and wealth form the demarkation of the frontiers. The rich lose sight of the poor, or only recognise them when attention is forced to their existence by their appearance as vagrants, mendicants, or delinquents. It is a very common error to attribute to the factories the evils which really arise from an immigrating and non‑factory population; a population, too, which has been recently increased by the great demand for unskilled labour produced by the works and excavations required for the new railways which are radiating on every side from Manchester. I took some pains to ascertain the character of this immigrating population, and I found it such as to account, in a very great degree, for the high rate of mortality and the low condition of morals in the township of Manchester. It appeared that peasants inadequate to the fatigues of rural toil frequently come into the towns with the hope of finding some light employment suited to their feeble strength, and that persons whose character is blighted in the country seek to escape notice in the crowd of the town. Having conversed with many of these persons, and also made inquiries from the guardians of the poor and the administrators of public charities, I am persuaded that Manchester must long continue to present an appearance of great destitution and delinquency which does not belong to the town itself, but arises from a class of immigrants and passengers. Some years ago I was much struck by seeing it stated that 17,406 inmates were admitted into the Manchester Asylum for the Houseless Poor between February 1838 and February 1839. On inquiry, I found that they were chiefly persons passing through Manchester, or immigrants who had been attracted by the hope of immediately finding employment. The actual number of persons relieved was 9870 ; of these only 3500 belonged to Lancashire, while not less than 1700 were Irishmen. I am unable to state how many were actual natives or long residents in Manchester and its vicinity, but from my inquiries I should think that they were less than a tenth of the whole number. It follows that nine‑tenths of Manchester destitution at that period, estimated by the very rigid test of inability to procure lodgings, arises from circumstances utterly unconnected with the locality. When perturbating causes of such enormous amount are in operation, it is sufficiently obvious that the condition of Manchester would afford a very erroneous test of the influence of factories on a population.

It gives me great pleasure to find that my views on this subject coincide with those of the Rev. Mr. Parkinson, the author of an admirable paper on the statistical antiquities of Manchester, derived from the Records of the Collegiate Church, which he read to the Statistical Section of the British Association. The ability, research, and acumen displayed in that paper give me a strong assurance of the value of his testimony in all matters of statistical inquiry, while the high estimation in which he is held by men of every party in Manchester sufficiently proves that he is not a man who would colour or garble statements to serve a purpose. Having inquired, at an annual meeting of the subscribers to the Night Asylum, what proportion of the persons relieved came from the town or neighbourhood, and received for answer that a very small portion indeed came from those districts, ‑he made the following observations:

"My reason for putting the questions which have been so satisfactorily answered, with reference to the proportion of applications from residents of this town and those from casual visitants, was, that, unless the statement were to go forth with some explanation, a handle would be made of it at a distance, and we should have persons exclaiming‑' Look, what a miserable population they have in Manchester; no less than 17,000 of its poor inhabitants have been driven to ask for refuge at the Asylum for the Destitute !' It is important, therefore, that the statement should go forth that the institution is open, not merely to the inhabitants of this neighbourhood, but to all who seek for shelter therein; and that the proportion of strangers has hitherto far exceeded that of the population of our own neighbourhood. I was desirous, moreover, that the proportion should be specifically stated, because I believe that a feeling is becoming very prevalent elsewhere that there is something in ;be character of manufactures which is unnatural, and opposed to the will of God. Now I maintain that that state to which we are tending in manufactures is as much the will of God as agricultural pursuits. I am aware that an amiable and well known poet has said‑and the saying has almost passed into a proverb –" God made the country, but mail made the town,"--meaning, of course, that the country was the most proper place for man to dwell in, and that the occupations of town‑life were unnatural. I think, on the contrary, that, instead of an agricultural population, the people of this country were meant to be one of a very different character. I have no national predilections for my present mode of thinking. My birth and early education put me in a very different position from the one in which I now am; but, being now an inhabitant of Manchester,‑having had ample opportunity of observing and judging,‑and being in a position where I can have no motive for a partial judgment, I maintain that, if we can strike an average of all classes of our population and the population of other districts, we shall find that the morality of this district will not be below that of the most primitive agricultural population. I have the authority of a high military officer, and also that of other persons, for saying that the streets of Manchester, at ten o'clock at night, are as retired as those of the most rural districts. When we look at the extent of this parish, containing at least 300,000 souls, ‑more than the population of the half of our counties, ‑can we be surprised that there is a great amount of immorality? But a great proportion of that immorality is committed by those who have been already nursed in crime in districts of the country supposed to be more innocent than our own, and are, apparently, added to the number of those who swell our police reports, not so much because we hold out greater facilities in rearing them, as that they are apprehended through the superior vigilance of our police. I think it desirable that I should state this, as being an impartial observer, and one coming from a distant part of the country; and as I see gentlemen of the press here, I hope that my evidence may be recorded."

Influenced by these considerations, I resolved to delay my further examination of Manchester until I had visited some of the manufacturing districts where the influence of factories could be seen undisturbed by the perturbations of an immigrant and fluctuating population. And to this course I was influenced by another consideration. Until the present fearful shock checked the natural course of manufacturing development, Manchester was becoming daily more and more a commercial depot, and losing its manufacturing character. I was therefore anxious to see whether any progress had been made to the formation of what I believe the most healthy condition of society, the union of manufacturing, and agricultural industry in the same families, the members of which would have the opportunity of directing their energies to either employment, according to their taste and natural capabilities. I am bound in gratitude to add that, when my anxiety to obtain information on the subject was known, every possible facility was offered and afforded by the manufacturers and millowners. " All we wish is to be, known: there is nothing in our entire system which we desire to be concealed," was the universal cry, and of the sincerity with which it was uttered I have received the most striking and convincing demonstrations.

-------------------------

\* " It is a singular circumstance that at this day the factory system and its influence on society should be so little known in England; and that it should be possible for persons to advance the most contradictory opinions on the working of that system, and the morals and conduct of the people employed under it. Grafted as it now is in our political and social existence, its real character is yet to be learned by the people at large. "‑*Athenaeum*, August 20.

\*\* “It was the misfortune of the factory system that it took its sudden start at a moment when the entire energies of the British legislature were preoccupied with the emergencies of the French revolution. The foundations on which it reposes were laid in obscurity, and its early combinations developed without attracting the notice of statesmen or philosophers; and the concomitant development of national wealth having been unfortunately made subservient to the wasteful necessities of war, and its results consumed, the natural connexions of the labour‑market were disturbed in a way that added very materially to the difficulties of a new and untried phasis of social life. There thus crept into unnoticed existence a closely condensed population, under modifying influences the least understood, for whose education, religious wants, legislative and. municipal protection, no care was taken, and for whose physical necessities the more forethought was requisite, from the very rapidity with which men were attracted to these new centres. To such causes may be referred the incivilization and 'immorality of the overcrowded manufacturing towns, and some part of the still more fearful miseries of fluctuating markets and unsteady prices. Whatever may be thought of the oppressive weight of the interest to be paid to the national creditor, commerce has suffered far more severely by the want of the capital it represents, and which was utterly destroyed in 'just and necessary' warfare. From this consideration, something more than a prima facie suspicion arises, that the imputed evils of a manufacture are foreign to it, as a cause‑that they are an episode (a dismal episode) in its history, and (to use a trivial expression) much more its misfortune than its fault.”-*Athenaum*, August 20.

\*\*\* " Be machinery and its concomitants a good, an evil, or, like most other things pertaining to humanity, a mingled web of good and ill together, its existence is a matter of fact, it is an institution rooted in our civilization, a step made in a path, that admits of no retrogradation. It is not merely, what the author has called it. ”un fait accompli:" it is a fact that carries with it an indefinite series of consequences, which cannot be resisted; which, by wisdom, forecast, and honesty, may be directed to national greatness and the increase of human happiness, even to the furthermost ends of the world; but which, if neglected or disregarded, will become pregnant with the deepest calamity."‑*Athenaum*

\*\*\*\* “This passage‑at the moment we are writing so painfully illustrated‑is in itself a sufficient demonstration of the folly put forth about arresting the march of manufacture, and returning the people to agricultural occupations. But who was ever the dupe of such propositions? Not those who put them forth ‑not any one, gentle or simple, whose reason was not perverted by the corrupted logic of ill‑understood self‑interests. Still the proposition has been pressed on public attention with confidence, and the implied possibility, having been suffered to creep unperceived into argument, has operated powerfully to lead to the falsest conclusions."‑Athenaum, August 20.

LETTER II, The Oaks, Turton, near Bolton.

How a painter would have enjoyed the sight which broke upon my waking eyes this morning! To my right is one of the tributaries to the Irwell, winding through the depths of a richly wooded and precipitous valley, or rather ravine; the sun's rays, glinting from the waters, come like flashes through every opening in the foliage, warning me that I have remained a laggard without being able to plead fatigue as an excuse, ‑it being now a settled maxim that nobody is to be tired from a journey by railway. Before me, at the extreme of the level on which I stand, and which I may describe as a promontory of table‑land surrounded by valleys, is the Hall in the Wood, memorable for having been the residence of Crompton, the inventor of the spinning‑Jenny, and to me scarcely less interesting as one of the most perfect specimens remaining of the domestic architecture of our Saxon ancestors, and of their descendants the Franklins or old country gentlemen of England, who never bowed their head to the Norman yoke, and who refused to adopt the fashions imported from the Continent. Beyond is the hill on which a great part of the busy town of Bolton is built. The intervening valley is studded with factories and bleach‑works. Thank God, smoke is rising from the lofty chimneys of most of them! for I have not travelled thus far without learning, by many a painful illustration, that the absence of smoke from the factory‑chimney indicates the quenching of the fire on many a domestic hearth, want of employment to many a willing labourer, and want of bread to many an honest family. The smoke too creates no nuisance here the chimneys are too far apart; and it produces variations in the atmosphere and sky which, to me at least, have a pleasing and picturesque effect.

From this description every man in Lancashire will see that I am an inmate of the house of Mr. Henry Ashworth, and will pardon me for resolving not to say one syllable respecting him or his family. Were I to attempt to speak of them as they deserve, those who know them would exclaim that I had done injustice to their merits, and those who do not know them would accuse me of flattery. Both imputations are avoided by silence; and, so bestowing my heartiest benediction on the Oaks and its fine saplings, I will at once proceed to visit the mills of Turton and Egerton, which have deservedly gained a European reputation.

The Turton Mill is built in the bottom of the ravine, just under the owner's residence, from which, however, it is separated by the little stream I have already noticed. It is a plain stone building, but not without some pretensions to architectural beauty. On descending to visit it, my attention was excited at the entrance by a very simple circumstance, which I think not unworthy of record. Fruit‑trees, unprotected by fence, railing, or palisade, are trained against the main wall of the building, and in the season the ripe fruit bangs temptingly within reach of every operative who goes in or out of the mill. There is not an instance of even a cherry having been plucked, though the young piecers and cleaners must pass them five or six times every day, and they are far from being deficient in the natural love for fruit, as 1 found that they were good customers to the itinerant hawkers. Mr. Ashworth's garden is on the side of the factory remote from the house: it is rich in fruits, flowers, and vegetables, but it is absolutely unprotected ‑ a child could scramble through the hedge, and in my schoolboy days I would have thought little of clearing the gate in a leap: the gate, however, is only secured by a latch, and could not therefore exclude an infant. Now this unprotected garden has never suffered the slightest injury or depredation. I know of less tempting gardens secured by high walls, ponderous gates, and a regular apparatus of bolts, locks, and bars, to which man‑traps and spring guns were found necessary as an additional protection. \*

It is not necessary for me to describe the processes used in the cotton manufacture; I have already done so in a work entitled ‘England in the Nineteenth Century'‑a work, by the way, to which I have been a very limited contributor. My connection with it, indeed, extends no farther than to somewhere about the middle of the third number relating to Lancashire, and even with that portion was but partial. I take the opportunity of making this statement to save me for the future the trouble of disavowing sentiments for which I am not responsible, and reconciling contradictions of which I am not guilty.

The interior of Mr. Ashworth's mill does not differ materially from that of many other well‑regulated mills which I have visited, such as Ashton's of Hyde, Taylor's of Preston, and a host of others. I was, however, pleased to find that great care had been bestowed upon the " boxing up " of dangerous machinery. I learned that accidents were very rare, and that, when they did occur, they were, as my own senses convinced me that they must have been, the result of the grossest negligence or of absolute wilfulness. I mention this circumstance because the burst of sentimental sympathy for the condition of

the factory‑operatives which, a few years ago, frightened the isle from its propriety, appealed largely to the number of accidents which happened from machinery, and I was myself for a time fool enough to believe that mills were places in which young children were, by some inexplicable process, ground‑bones, flesh, and blood together‑into yarn and printed calicoes. I remember very well when first I visited a cotton mill feeling something like disappointment at not discovering the hoppers into which the infants were thrown. I have since found that such absurdity is only credited by those who, like myself at that period, could not tell the difference between a cotton‑mill and a tread‑mill. But a very little consideration should have taught me better: derangements of machinery are very expensive accidents to remedy; and if the mill‑owners of Lancashire were as reckless of human life as the worst of their assailants have chosen to describe them, they certainly are not men likely to disregard their own pockets. I have had. some opportunities of estimating the cost of accidents, and I know that the engineer's bill is considerably heavier than the surgeon's. Without at all giving mill owners credit for more than the average philanthropy of their countrymen, I am quite ready to repose confidence in their anxiety to prevent accidents, because their own obvious interests are a tolerably safe security for their humanity.

The conditions of health in the mills of Turton and Egerton, and I may add generally in all that I have examined, are exceedingly favourable. The working rooms are lofty, spacious, and well ventilated, kept at an equable temperature, and scrupulously clean. There is nothing in sight, sound, or smell to offend the most fastidious sense. So much space is occupied by the machinery that crowding is physically impossible. I should be very well contented to have as large a proportion of room and air in my own study as a cotton‑spinner in any of the mills of Lancashire. With respect to the length of time during which the work is continued, I must remark that the toil is not very great, nor is it incessant. The heaviest part of the labour is executed by the steam‑engine or the water‑wheel; and there are so many intervals of rest, that I am under the mark when I assert that an operative in a cotton‑factory is at rest one minute out of every three during the period of his nominal employment. On the other hand, these intervals of rest are brief and quick in their recurrence; they cannot therefore be turned to any useful account. Hence I should not be indisposed to give favourable consideration to a time‑bill, if its advocates could show me how the time of labour could be shortened without the amount of wages being reduced. Some of them no doubt will say, compel the employers to pay still the same amount of wages, because in all ages of the world that philanthropy has been fashionable which consists in being exceedingly generous at the expense of other people; but I should like to know by what process employers could be forced to pay a rate of wages disproportionate to their profits. I trust that those who use such arguments will acquit me of the heinous sin of political economy when I tell them that acts of parliament could no more control the rate of wages by direct agency than they could regulate the course of the winds or the flow of the tide. Indirectly, indeed, they can effect a great deal; they can close a market against‑the products of British industry by refusing to take the only payment which those who are eager to be purchasers have it in their power to offer, and, having thus turned off the customers, the authors of the mischief may turn to the piles of goods left in the warehouse, and console the disappointed proprietors with a schoolboy oration on over‑ production.

It happened that the Messrs. Ashworth had made a reduction of wages some short time before I visited their factories. I was anxious to know how this measure had been received by the persons in their employment; and I took the opportunity, which I found easy enough, of inquiring their opinions in the absence of their employer and the overseers. They uniformly stated that Messrs. Ashworth had delayed making the reduction for weeks after it had been made by their neighbours, that they were conscious of their being forced into the measure by the decay of trade, and this decay they universally attributed to the refusal of the government to admit the materials of payment proffered by those who were anxious to become our customers. On one occasion, the group with which I was conversing on the road was joined by a man who was stated to have belonged to a large factory which had just been closed. He described the increasing misery which this event had produced in the district from which he came, ‑I think the neighbourhood of Accrington, ‑and then quite astounded me by declaring that abundant means of furnishing food to the starving, and employment to the idle, so as immediately to relieve all the distress of the manufacturing districts, were in the country, and were perversely withheld. Not a little surprised and. perplexed, I asked him for an explanation. " The corn in bond," he instantly replied; " it would pay for my former employer's yarn, ‑it would give food to my starving family, it would set those wheels going which are never likely to turn another spindle." Here was a lesson in political economy from a vagrant cotton‑spinner which I had not learned from my university education or private study. I felt and confessed my obligation. He coolly replied, " I hope you will never have such a teacher as I have had, ‑*it* *has been starved into me!* " I shall feel obliged to any one who gives me the credit of inventing this anecdote : for the mind that minted the concluding phrase must have been richly endowed with the highest attributes of genius.

My desire to examine the condition of the operatives in Turton and Egerton before visiting the distressed districts arose from the necessity of having some standard of comparison by which I might measure the amount of distress; in other words, I wished to know what the operatives had fallen *from*, as well as what they had fallen *to.* The necessity of this was strongly impressed upon my mind in a conversation with one of my countrymen, an Irish gentleman who was just paying his first visit to England. I was describing to him the misery of a family of six persons whose united earnings only amounted to eight shillings per week, and he answered that there were families in his own neigbbourhood who would think themselves very well off with five of the money. In justice to my countryman I must add that I have heard similar remarks from persons connected with the agricultural counties of England. I despair, indeed, of being, able to show to persons who have not personally investigated the difference of right to remuneration between the skilled and unskilled labourer. It requires actual observation, and something of acquaintance with both, to measure the distance between the operative and the ploughman.

I prefer visiting the cottages of Turton to those of Egerton; the latter may be suspected of being something of a show‑place. Its immense water‑wheel is one of the wonders of Lancashire, and draws crowds of visitors. Few of them fail to be attracted by the substantial neatness of the cottages in the village, and hence the families of the operatives, being used to inspection, may be supposed in some cases to prepare for it. This is not the case at Turton, which lies out of the main lines of road, and is a secluded nook which is not to be reached without some trouble. The principal village occupied by the operatives is named Banktop, from the circumstance of its being situated on the summit of ‑the side of the ravine remote from Mr. Ashworth's dwelling. The situation, though open and airy, is not unsheltered; the cottages are built of stone, and contain from four to six rooms each; back premises with suitable conveniences are attached to them all. I did not observe any traces of that taste for the cultivation of flowers which I found rife among the occupants of Mr. Ashton's cottages at Hyde in Cheshire, nor did I find that any of the operatives raised in their gardens a supply of vegetables sufficient for the consumption of their families, as I have found in other places. I saw, however, some fine plants of rhubarb, and learned that they often furnished materials for dinner in the shape of puddings. Let me here observe that the domestic economy of the working population would be vastly benefited by a larger and cheaper supply of sugar than they can at present obtain. It is obvious that fruit and rhubarb pies and puddings would be a cheap and wholes6me substitute for meat if the high price of sugar did not more than counterbalance the cheapness of the other materials. \*\* I need not apologize to you for introducing this subject, which many will regard as trifling, for one of the earliest lessons I learned from your Lordship was the importance of the text, " Despise not the day of small things;" and for my own part, I regard nothing as trifling which can tend in any way to promote the health, the happiness, and the comfort of the working population.

I visited the interior of nearly every cottage; I found all well, and very many respectably, furnished: there were generally a mahogany table and chest of drawers. Daughters from most of the houses, but wives, as far as I could learn, from none, worked in the factory. Many of the women were not a little proud of their housewifery, and exhibited the Sunday wardrobes of their husbands, the stock of neatly folded shirts, &c.; and one of them gave me a very eloquent lecture on the mysteries of needlework, of which, though a tailor, I did not comprehend a syllable; but I could very well appreciate the results in the neatness and comfort around me. I found that there were some processes connected with the cotton manufacture which the women were permitted to execute in their own houses. " The pay," said one of the women, is not much, but it helps to boil the pot.”

As these cottages belong to Mr. Ashworth, I deemed it right to inquire bow far the letting of them could be identified with the truck system. I was informed by the operatives that permission to rent one of the cottages was regarded as a privilege and favour, that it was in fact a reward reserved for honesty, industry, and sobriety, and that a tenant guilty of any vice or immorality would at once be dismissed. Mr. Ashworth was said to be very strict in enforcing attention to cleanliness, both of house and person, and in requiring the use of separate sleeping apartments for the children of different sexes. It was sufficiently obvious, from the gossip I beard, that public opinion had established a very stringent form of moral police in the village, which superseded the necessity of any other. All were not merely contented with their situation, but proud of it; they contrasted their position with that of operatives in mills working halftime, or where business had been suspended, and sometimes expressed a nervous alarm lest the continued depression of trade should at last reach Turton, and reduce its operatives to the condition of those in Bolton. There were many persons employed in the mill who resided at a considerable distance from it, and I found instances of persons who bad to walk from three to four miles to their work.

A visit to the schools of Turton and Egerton was peculiarly interesting; the children sang in chorus two hymns, Moore's melody " Those Evening Bells," and some other pieces, with great taste, feeling, and propriety. I examined the children in mental arithmetic, geography, scripture history, and the nature of objects: on all these points the average was above that of any school which I ever visited in my life. The needlework of the girls was very good, and I believe that they receive something of an industrial training in addition to a mere literary education. This, which is valuable everywhere, becomes of the highest importance in Lancashire, where girls, obtaining mill‑employment at an early age, have little opportunity of being instructed in domestic economy, and acquiring the knowledge of the countless little contrivances which contribute so much both to the savings and the comfort of a wife and mother. In at least twenty different places I spoke upon this subject, and endeavoured to persuade the proprietors and managers of schools to have the children initiated Into the mysteries of plain and cheap cookery in all I was met with the same unanswerable argument, -the disproportionate taxation on all the materials from which cheap nutritious dishes can be made. Unfortunately taxation upon articles of food seems to increase in the inverse ratio of the ability to bear it.

It is not easy to fix upon a statistical test for measuring the intelligence of the adult operatives. I found clocks and small collections of books in all their dwellings; several bad wheel‑barometers, and in one house I noticed a hygrometer of very delicate construction. The books were for the most part on religious subjects; next to the Bible I found that Thomas a Kempis is the greatest favourite with the people of Lancashire. Nowhere did I see a book of immoral or even questionable tendency, unless the writings of the Mormonites, or Latter‑day Saints, may be considered as such, for this strange form of fanaticism, which we have imported from America, appears to be taking deep root in Lancashire. Enthusiasm in everything, indeed, appears to be a marked characteristic of this branch of the Saxon race, and it is equally manifested in new forms of religion and in new forms of machinery. In a conversation with a Mormonite, I met a curious instance of the perversion of Scripture so common among the leaders of fanatical sects. Among other proofs‑of flagrant falsehood in that most audacious of forgeries, ' The Book of Mormon,' I pointed out the mention of the‑mariner's compass, as used in navigation before the Christian era: " You will not find," I said, " any account of the compass in the Bible." " Begging your pardon, you will," said the enlightened controversialist; " in the account of St. Paul's voyage, in the Acts of the Apostles, it is stated, ' *We fetched a compass* and stood over to Rhegium."' So saying, he marched off, fully persuaded that he had silenced his opponent.

I find on my notes (but I have forgotten the locality of the incident) an account of a conversation with a woman who had come to the manufacturing districts from the midland counties; she complained sadly of the particularity with which the rules of cleanliness and decency were enforced, which she said " added hugely to her work." She acknowledged that her health and her comforts had been materially improved by the change, but she seemed to think that these physical ameliorations were nearly counterbalanced by the moral restraint to which she was subjected. Having easily discovered that I was an Irishman, she was very indignant at my want of sympathy with her complaints, averring, unfortunately with truth, that my countrymen were " noways particular in these matters." Her standard of morality did not appear to be very high: she spoke very bitterly of some mill‑owner who had turned a girl out of his employment for having had an illegitimate child, and heartily scolded some of her neighbours who had censured her for not sending her child to the Sunday‑school.

I have more than once gone down in the evening to Turton Mills, to see the operatives coming from work. To judge from their appearance, the employment in which they were engaged could not be very fatiguing. The boys were as merry as crickets: there was not one of the girls who looked as if she would refuse an invitation to a dance; and, unless my ears very much deceived me, I heard some such measure proposed by a party of tittering damsels coming from the power‑loom shed.

I have thus given, although imperfectly, the aspect of the population connected with a factory which distress has yet only reached in the lenient shape of a reduction of wages: if at this crisis I found such abundant elements of comfort and enjoyment, what would its condition have been if nothing bad interfered to check its advancing prosperity?

-------------------

*\*The ‘Spectator,' in noticing the first edition of this work, denied that this anecdote afforded any proof of the high moral character of the operatives, asserting the probability of this for­bearance arising from a fear of dismissal. It is singular to find this unworthy insinuation in a journal which has so often proclaimed itself the advocate of " the working classes;" but I do not profess to explain the manifold inconsistencies of the ‘Spectator.' It is more interesting to direct attention to a still stronger proof of the honour and honesty of the Lancashire operatives exhibited in the conduct of an excited multitude of strangers to these very fruit‑trees. On Monday, August 15th, Turton mill was visited by a body of the turn‑outs, the machinery stopped, and the workmen compelled to go home. But though the trees were loaded with fruit, and many of the multitude so exhausted that they went up to Mr. Ashworth's house craving for a morsel of bread, not a single pear was plucked, nor was any act of mischief done which could possibly be avoided.*

*\*\* I leave this passage as originally written, though it is loosely expressed, and does not convey my meaning. Were I to propose that any vegetable diet should be “a substitute for meat" in the operative's standard of food, I should have deserved much heavier reprobation than my indulgent censor in the ‘Times' has chosen to bestow upon me. I believe that the standard of food could not be lowered without greatly impairing the health, the efficiency, the national value, and even the morality of the operative. My meaning was, that pies, dumplings, &c., might prove an acceptable variety in the operative's fare, and be a good substitute for meat to those who are unable to procure that aliment, which in nine instances out of ten is the case with the junior branches of the operative's family. My opinion on these points is not worth much, but, as the ‘Times' has in some degree forced me to express it, I beg leave to say that I consider the standard of food and comfort for the working population of England already far too low, and that one great object at which I have aimed in this little work is to show the danger of any further depression.*